

Clinical Assessment

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- As with other assessment methods, interpreting physical signs of malnutrition requires skills and clinical judgment. Most physical signs are nonspecific; they can reflect any of several nutrient deficiencies as well as condition not related to nutrition.

Israa Shatwan

Clinical signs of nutrient deficiencies

Body system	acceptable	Sings of malnutrition	Other possible causes
Hair	Shiny, firm in scalp	Dull, brittle, dry, loose; falls out (PEM); corkscrew hair (copper)	Excessive hair bleaching; hair loss from aging, chemotherapy, or radiation therapy.

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Clinical signs of nutrient deficiencies (Cont'd)

Body system	acceptable	Sings of malnutrition	Other possible causes
eyes	Bright, clear pink membranes; adjust easily to light	Pale membranes (iron); spots, dryness, nightblindness (V.A); redness at corners of eyes (V.B).	Anemia, unrelated to nutrition; eye disorders; allergies

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Clinical signs of nutrient deficiencies (Cont'd)

Body system	acceptable	Sings of malnutrition	Other possible causes
Lips.	Smooth.	Dry, cracked, or with sores in the corner of lips (V.B.)	Sunburn, windburn, excessive salivation from ill-fitting dentures other disorders.

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Clinical signs of nutrient deficiencies (Cont'd)

Body system	acceptable	Sings of malnutrition	Other possible causes
Mouth and gums	Red tongue without swelling, normal sense of test ; teeth without caries; gums without bleeding, swelling, or pain.	Smooth or magenta tongue (V.B), decreased taste sensations (zinc); swollen, bleeding gums (V.C)	Medications, periodontal disease (poor oral hygiene).

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Clinical signs of nutrient deficiencies (Cont'd)

Body system	acceptable	Sings of malnutrition	Other possible causes
skin	Smooth, firm, good color	Poor wound healing (PEM, V.C, zinc); dry, rough, lack of fat under skin (essential fatty acids, PEM,V.B); bruising, bleeding under skin (V.C and K).	Poor skin care, diabetes mellitus, aging, medications.

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Clinical signs of nutrient deficiencies (Cont'd)

Body system	acceptable	Sings of malnutrition	Other possible causes
Nails	Smooth, firm, pink.	Ridged (PEM); spoon shaped, pale (iron).	

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